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INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 0102
RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY BAKU PRIORITY 0028
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY 0213
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 0470
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 1053
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY 0312
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY 0095
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0355
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0931
RUEHJA/AMEMBASSY JAKARTA PRIORITY 0088
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0275
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1349
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RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI PRIORITY 0156
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 0010
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RUEHVJ/AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO PRIORITY 0008
RUEHSF/AMEMBASSY SOFIA PRIORITY 0057
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000040

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STATE FOR NEA/ARP, EB/ESC/TFS, S/CT; NSC FOR HINNEN,
TREASURY FOR HEFFERNAN AND HECHT

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [KU](#) [KTFN](#)

SUBJECT: TERROR FINANCE: EMBASSY KUWAIT VIEWS ON POSSIBLE
RIHS DESIGNATION

REF: A. 06 STATE 202039

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- [1](#)L. 06 KUWAIT 3563
- [1](#)M. 06 KUWAIT 3450 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Through recent actions and private comments to us and senior USG officials, the GOK has made clear its opposition to the designation of the Kuwaiti charity Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS). Going back almost a year, to the April 2006 visit of Treasury U/S Levey and our transmittal of a series of non-papers detailing suspicious activities by a number of RIHS branches outside Kuwait, the GOK has consistently contended that the U.S. has failed to provide convincing evidence of RIHS links to terrorist activity abroad. Until the December 12 raid by Bosnian security forces of RIHS offices in that country, host

governments of countries in which RIHS had apparent associations with terrorists -- Bangladesh and Albania, in addition to Bosnia -- had apparently done nothing to convey their concerns about RIHS to the GOK. The GOK has exploited this silence to argue that U.S. charges against RIHS are insubstantial and lack objectivity.

¶2. (S/NF) During her November 2006 visit to Kuwait, APHSCT Townsend raised the possible designation of the Bangladeshi, Bosnian, and Albanian branches of RIHS with the head of Kuwait's National Security Bureau, Shaykh Ahmed Al-Fahd (Ref B). Shaykh Ahmed stated that the Government of Bangladesh had told Kuwaiti officials they had "no problems" with RIHS activities in their country. He also said a U.S. designation could negatively affect RIHS cooperation with the Kuwaiti intelligence service and jeopardize access to valuable intelligence information.

¶3. (S/NF) Embassy Kuwait believes that the GOK will respond to any designation of RIHS -- whether of its overseas branches or the organization as a whole -- as it did to the December 7 designation by Treasury of three Kuwaiti terrorist inciters: Kuwait will seek to block any designation in the 1267 UN Sanctions Committee. In the absence of a UN listing, RIHS will continue to operate with little impact on local operations in Kuwait and abroad.

¶4. (S/NF) The GOK's views toward RIHS are unlikely to change absent stronger evidence of RIHS involvement in terrorism. RIHS is widely regarded in Kuwait as a reputable charity, and there is little political will for a direct confrontation

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between the GOK and RIHS supporters. RIHS Chairman Tareq Al-Essa comes from the influential Al-Qinayat clan, which includes prominent Kuwaiti merchant families such as Al-Sultan, Al-Mutawa, Al-Ayoub, Al-Bader, Al-Musallam, and more than a dozen others. While some of his relatives may not agree with his politics, the U.S.-educated Al-Essa comes from a well-connected network of families.

¶5. (S/NF) While there is generally little debate in the Kuwaiti parliament on the role and activities of charities, most of the Islamist MPs tend to object to any criticism of Islamic charities, especially RIHS and the Social Reform Society. A number of MPs spoke out strongly against Russia's designation of the two charities last fall. Influential MPs Ahmed Bager and Dr. Ali Al-Omari are both members of the Salafi Islamic Grouping with which RIHS is affiliated. Duaj Al-Shammari, a member of parliament's Human Rights Committee, has supported efforts to disband the office that regulates charities within the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor. A designation of RIHS will be characterized as another example of U.S. opposition to Islam in general, a charge that will carry considerable impact in Kuwait and around the Islamic world, keeping in mind that the vast majority of RIHS activities are legitimate philanthropy.

¶6. (S/NF) In the absence of what it contends is credible information on RIHS involvement in terrorism, the GOK has made clear that it prefers a strategy of cooptation and continued surveillance rather than designations to contain Salafi individuals and entities.

¶7. (S/NF) We understand that Treasury is preparing a more detailed case summary of RIHS involvement in terrorist activity. We ask that U.S. agencies and Embassy Kuwait have adequate time to evaluate and comment on the new material before we take any further steps on RIHS.

¶8. (S/NF) Embassy also believes that the designation of RIHS may or may not further USG goals of preventing flows of funds to terrorists. When he met with Juan Zarate recently in Washington, Ambassador suggested that we confront RIHS directly with our suspicions and evidence, and over a period of time test whether the organization is willing to clean up

its act to our satisfaction. Such an action could give any future decision to designate more credibility. We are also concerned that designation of RIHS will simply drive flows of terror funding further into untraceable, informal channels.

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LeBaron